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WASHINGTON, DC — U.S. Congressman Mike Pence released the following statement on the inauguration of President Barack Obama today.

“With the words “all men are created equal,” the American experiment began. Throughout our history, the ideal of equality of opportunity has been among the most important principles of our national life. In fact, the pursuit of equality for people of African descent has been among the most compelling causes of Western civilization.

“While I would have preferred that the first African-American President come from the party of Lincoln, the historic and monumental nature of today's inauguration is undeniable. And President Obama's story is uniquely American. As our new President said, “only in America could [his] story be possible,” and it has inspired millions around the world to believe that we do indeed embrace the principle of equality. My family and I will stand with all Americans today and celebrate this milestone of equality with genuine enthusiasm.

“On the cusp of this historic inauguration, we cannot help but recall those whose lives were wholly devoted to seeing the principles of equality brought to bear on our society.

“We think of William Wilberforce, the passionate, articulate Member of Parliament who dedicated over two decades tirelessly advocating for the abolition of the slave trade. We think of President Abraham Lincoln who, in the face of bitter war and calamitous division, persevered in the cause of emancipation. How appropriate that the day set aside for this nation to commemorate the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ultimately was the eve of the inauguration of our first African-American President.

“If it were not for the sacrifice of these great men, this day would never have come to pass. The Good Book instructs that we are to “act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” We see this timeless edict manifest in the lives of Wilberforce, Lincoln and King. It is fitting that we honor them as we witness Barack Obama take the oath of office and become the 44th President of the United States.

“In my support of the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, the Second Chance Act and the DC Voting Rights Act, I have sought to right historic wrongs and pursue the “more perfect union” which all Americans should enjoy and I will continue in this cause for the rest of my life.

“While we may have disagreements with the new President in the months and years to come—and we surely will—on this day we are pleased to join this national ceremony and pray not only for President Obama and his family, but for all Americans, that the United States of America will always be the land of liberty and justice for all.

“Congratulations Mr. President.”